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NOFORN

E.O. 12958:DECL: 1.6X1, 1.6X6

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA -- DEFENSE MINISTER DANJUMA TALKS
TOUGH TO THE FRENCH

REF: ABUJA 2787

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER; REASONS:
1.6X1, 1.6X6.

1. (S/NF) Summary: During a September 23-24
Invitational Visit to EUCOM headquarters, Nigerian
Defense Minister T.Y. Danjuma castigated the French
for allegedly supporting Cameroon in the Bakassi
dispute. A close confidante of President Obasanjo,
Danjuma implied that Nigeria might nationalize French
oil companies if the Bakassi flared because of
Cameroonian reluctance, due to French support, to
negotiate a political solution. End Summary.

2. (S/NF) During meetings with EUCOM DCINC, Nigerian
Defense Minister talked expansively about the Bakassi.
Danjuma asserted that the Bakassi was Nigerian
territory and that Nigeria had the stronger legal
case. Dismissing the legal significance of the 1913
Anglo-German treaty that ceded Bakassi to Germany,
Danjuma claimed that the treaty is a nullity. As a
"protecting power," the U.K. lacked authority, under
international law, to dispose of the territory of the
Obong of Calabar, the traditional ruler whose
territory included Bakassi. (Comment: Most Nigerians
embrace it as an article of national faith that
Bakassi is theirs and that their case is legally and
morally unassailable. While hard for outsiders to
understand why Nigerians cannot see the weakness of
their case, it is even more psychologically difficult
for Nigerians to see that the Cameroonian position has
merit. This inability to make an objective appraisal
leads Nigerians to believe that an adverse ICJ verdict
would be an injustice engineered by another country
wanting to undermine Nigeria's national interests and
steal its oil wealth. End Comment.)

3. (S/NF) Danjuma was surprisingly open about
Nigeria's pique at perceived French support for
Cameroon in the dispute over the Bakassi peninsula.
Danjuma had accompanied President Obasanjo to Paris
for the September 5 meeting with Cameroon's President
Biya. Despite the positive public spin placed on the
meeting, the Nigerian side was dissatisfied. It could
not extract from Biya what it most wanted: an
agreement to suspend the ICJ case so the sides could
negotiate a political settlement. Obasanjo directed
Danjuma to remain in Paris to express Nigerian
displeasure to TotalFina/ ELF management. In his
meeting with company executives, Danjuma told us that
he complained the GOF was encouraging Biya's
intransigence toward negotiations with Nigeria on
Bakassi. He also told the French oilmen that France
was providing military assistance to strengthen
Cameroonian resolve over Bakassi.

4. (S/NF) Danjuma warned the businessmen that
continued French instigation of Cameroon's attitude
would be a serious challenge to Franco-Nigerian
relations. Alluding to the nationalization of British
Petroleum in 1977 due to South Africa and British
support for Rhodesia, Danjuma clearly implied that the
GON was contemplating taking the same action against
France's biggest oil company unless France assumed a
more helpful, or at least, a neutral role in the
Bakassi.

5. (S/NF) COMMENT: The Nigerians intend Danjuma's
comments to reach the French government, and Danjuma
probably expects us to raise this with the French as
well. Apparently, the Nigerians believe the best way

to get to Biya is by pressuring Paris, and some of Danjuma's remarks were probably bluster intended to achieve the desired effect. Even if nationalization of TotalFina/ELF assets is improbable, the GON could easily exclude the oil major and other French firms from participation in future oil ventures in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the Cameroonian FM visited Nigeria for the Independence Day celebrations and reportedly came with a special message from Biya. The Nigerians now seem to be following a strategy of private tough talk coupled with conciliatory public posturing.

JETER